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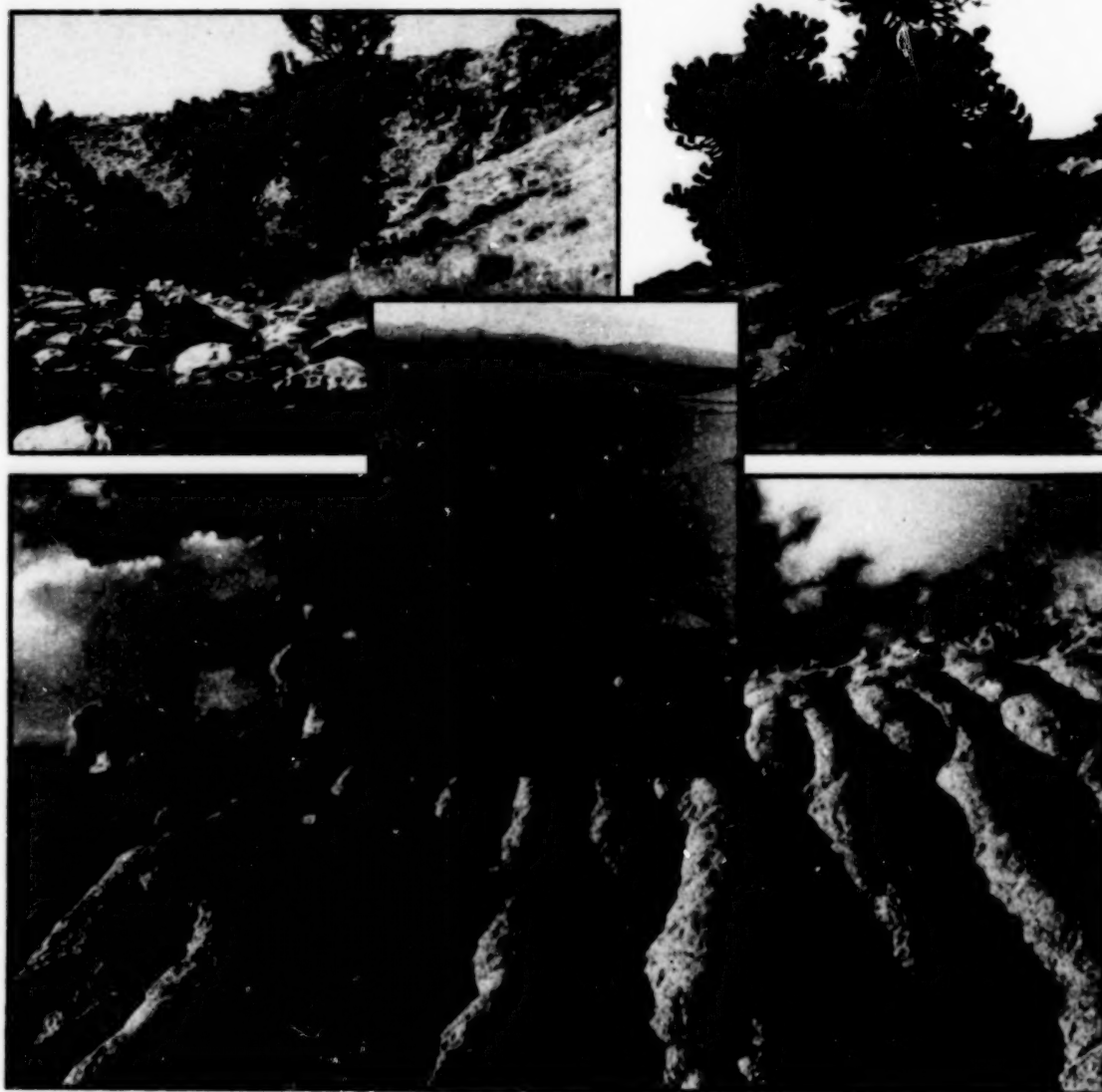


U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Wyoming State Office

September 1991

Wyoming Wilderness Study Report Statewide Overview



Volume I

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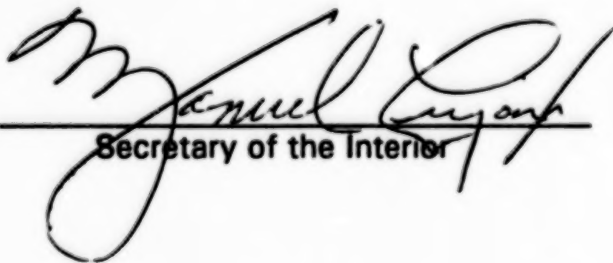


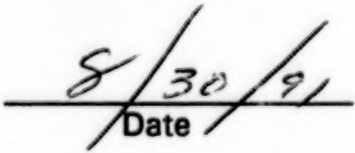
THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

RECORD OF DECISION

The following are the wilderness recommendations for 42 wilderness study areas (WSAs) in the State of Wyoming. These recommendations were developed from the findings of a 15-year wilderness study process by the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Land Management. The wilderness studies considered each area's resource values, present and projected future uses of the areas, public input, the manageability of the areas as wilderness, the environmental consequences of designating or not designating the areas as wilderness, and mineral surveys prepared by the U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines.

Based on our review of those studies, I have concluded that 240,364 acres within 21 study areas should be designated as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System and that 337,140 acres within 30 study areas should be released from wilderness study for uses other than wilderness. The acreage recommendations for each WSA, with which I concur, are listed in the following table. The Wilderness Study Report accompanying this decision includes, a detailed discussion of the recommendations and maps showing the boundaries of each area.


Secretary of the Interior


Date

**WYOMING WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS
(TABLE 1)**

WSA Name	Study	WSA Number	Area Recommended for Wilderness	Area Recommended for Non-Wilderness
Owl Creek	Grass Creek/Cody	WY-010-104	710	0
Bobcat Draw Badlands	Grass Creek/Cody	WY-010-126	18,540	0
Sheep Mountain	Grass Creek/Cody	WY-010-130	0	23,250
Red Butte	Grass Creek/Cody	WY-010-131	0	11,350
Honeycombs	Washakie	WY-010-221	0	21,000
Cedar Mountain	Washakie	WY-010-222	10,223	11,337
Medicine Lodge	Washakie	WY-010-240	3,600	4,140
Alkali Creek	Washakie	WY-010-241	8,187	1,913
Trapper Creek	Washakie	WY-010-242	7,200	0
McCullough Peaks	Grass Creek/Cody	WY-010-335	8,020	16,550
Sweetwater Canyon	Lander	WY-030-101	5,536	3,518
Copper Mountain	Lander	WY-030-111	0	6,858
Sweetwater Rocks	Lander	WY-030-120	0	6,316
Sweetwater Rocks	Lander	WY-030-122	0	12,789
Sweetwater Rocks	Lander	WY-030-123A	0	7,041
Sweetwater Rocks	Lander	WY-030-123B	0	6,429
Dubois Badlands	Dubois/Whiskey	WY-030-109	0	4,520
Whiskey Mountain	Dubois/Whiskey	WY-030-110	0	487
Ferris Mountains	Adobetown/Ferris	WY-030-407	22,245	0
Adobetown	Adobetown/Ferris	WY-030-408/ 040-401	10,920	74,790
Encampment River Canyon	Great Divide	WY-030-301	4,547	0
Prospect Mountain	Great Divide	WY-030-303	1,145	0
Bennett Mountain	Great Divide	WY-030-304	0	6,003
Scab Creek	Scab Creek ISA	WY-040-101	7,636	0
Lake Mountain	Rock Springs	WY-040-110	0	13,865
Raymond Mountain	Rock Springs	WY-040-221	32,936	0
Buffalo Hump	Rock Springs	WY-040-306	6,080	4,220
Sand Dunes	Rock Springs	WY-040-307	21,304	5,805
Alkali Draw	Rock Springs	WY-040-311	0	16,990
South Pinnacles	Rock Springs	WY-040-313	0	10,800
Alkali Basin/ East Sand Dunes	Rock Springs	WY-040-316/317	0	12,800
Red Lake	Rock Springs	WY-040-318	0	9,515
Honeycomb Buttes	Rock Springs	WY-040-323	37,287	3,901
Oregon Buttes	Rock Springs	WY-040-324	5,700	0
Whitehorse Creek	Rock Springs	WY-040-325	0	4,002
Devil's Playground/ Twin Buttes	Rock Springs	WY-040-401/402	23,841	0
Red Creek	Rock Springs	WY-040-406	0	8,020
Gardner Mountain	Buffalo	WY-060-201	0	6,423
North Fork	Buffalo	WY-060-202	0	10,089
Fortification Creek	Buffalo	WY-060-209	0	12,419
Pryor Mountain	Billings	MT-067-206	4,352	0
Big Horn Tack-On	Billings	MT-067-207	353	0
Statewide Totals			240,364	337,140

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**WYOMING STATEWIDE
WILDERNESS STUDY REPORT**

Prepared by:

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wyoming State Office**

September 1991

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WILDERNESS STUDY OVERVIEW

WILDERNESS STUDY PROCESS

The BLM began the wilderness review in accordance with the requirements of Section 603(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) dated October 21, 1976. This Act mandated that within 15 years the BLM would inventory and study its lands for their wilderness suitability and that based on this review, the Secretary of Interior would forward his wilderness recommendations to the President.

Minimum standards for the evaluation of BLM-administered lands in Wyoming were set by Congress in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. These standards require an area to generally appear to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; have outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; have at least 5,000 acres of land or is sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and may also contain ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historic value. In addition, each WSA was further evaluated for its multiple use value for other purposes such as mining, grazing or timber harvest. Guidelines were provided by the BLM wilderness study process (Federal Register, February 3, 1982). A summary of the findings for each WSA can be found in the summary analysis of study area recommendations.

THE STUDIES

The wilderness study report includes the recommendations and the rationale for those recommendations for 42 wilderness study areas (WSAs) in Wyoming. These WSAs were identified through the wilderness inventory process and analyzed in nine separate environmental impact statements (EISs). Map 1 shows the general location within the State of Wyoming for each of the nine studies. The final inventory decision for most Wyoming WSAs was made in May 1981. The inventory for some WSAs was accelerated to accommodate other resource needs and some inventory decisions were made following the resolution of the *Sierra Club v. Watt* lawsuit.

One additional study was completed in 1985 and sent to the Congress as part of a larger package of Instant Study Areas (ISAs). The ISA in Wyoming has received no action by the Congress and has been included in the Wilderness Study Report so that BLM's recommendations on wilderness designation may be viewed in their entirety.

The nine studies are listed in Table 2. The BLM in Wyoming completed eight of the studies while the BLM in Montana completed one study. Studies listed in Table 1 display only the Wyoming acreage. The ISA in Wyoming is listed in Table 3.

TABLE 2
LIST OF WILDERNESS STUDIES

Name of Study	Draft EIS Filed	Final EIS Filed	Study Acreage
Rock Springs District	September 1988	October 1990	224,702 ¹
Adobetown/Ferris	May 1983	January 1988	107,955
Grass Creek/Cody	July 1984	August 1990	77,030
Buffalo	August 1984	June 1986	28,931
Lander	January 1985	March 1990	48,089
Washakie	November 1986	November 1990	67,610
Great Divide	January 1987	August 1990	11,677
Dubois/Whiskey Mtn	September 1988	March 1990	5,007
Billings	April 1983	June 1988	4,705 ²

¹ Includes ISA acreage.

² Study primarily concerned WSAs in Montana.

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Instant Study Areas

There is one Instant Study Area (ISA) in Wyoming. This area was designated as a primitive area prior to November 1, 1975, and automatically qualified as a wilderness study area with the passage of FLPMA.

The ISA was studied for its suitability in advance of the WSAs in Wyoming. A recommendation on the area was submitted to Congress in 1985 as part of an omnibus ISA Bill.

TABLE 3

INSTANT STUDY AREA

Name of Study	ISA Acreage
Scab Creek	7,636

Wyoming Study Considerations

Wyoming's approach through the study process was to recommend wilderness designation for the WSAs where the overall wilderness quality is high and represents the best examples of ecosystems, landforms, or land offering special geological or scientific values within the State. These areas warrant permanent protection and inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This recommendation will:

- Establish 20 new wilderness units spanning a wide variety of Wyoming landforms, ecosystems, and other natural features.
- Improve the geographic distribution of wilderness areas and complement existing areas of Federal wilderness.
- Increase protection of nationwide ecosystem diversity.

At the same time, this recommendation will release all or parts of 30 WSAs having potential for mineral and energy resources, nonwilderness recreation, timber harvest, and other land uses. The lands not recommended for wilderness also generally have lower wilderness values which would not enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) or were determined by BLM to be unmanageable as wilderness, due to land status or existing private rights in the area.

KEY STUDY ISSUES - MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

Impacts on Wilderness Values

The WSAs all have the minimum characteristics necessary to qualify for wilderness consideration. These areas are roadless, natural in condition, and possess either outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive unconfined recreation. Wilderness designation will ensure the protection of wilderness values in these areas. Nondesignation of the WSAs would, over the long term, allow uses such as mineral exploration and development, woodland product sales, vegetative manipulation, and recreational off-road vehicle use, to degrade existing wilderness characteristics to a point where the areas would no longer qualify for wilderness consideration. Each of the nine studies considered the impact of designation or nondesignation on the wilderness values of each WSA.

Impacts on the Exploration for and Development of Mineral and Energy Resources

Lands designated as wilderness are withdrawn from mineral entry and leasing subject to rights associated with valid claims and leases existing at the time of designation. How wilderness designation would impact exploration for and development of mineral resources was an issue in seven of the nine studies. Many of the WSAs have the potential for undiscovered mineral resources. For some, this potential is low while for others a higher rating was assigned. The U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Bureau of Mines studied the mineral potential of 21 WSAs recommended all or partially suitable for wilderness.

Impacts on Recreational Off-Road Vehicle Use

Lands designated as wilderness would be closed to all motorized recreational off-road vehicle use. During the inventory process, WSA boundaries were drawn to exclude constructed and maintained roads. This issue's primary focus relates to vehicle use on four-wheel drive trails and cross-country vehicle travel. The impact of wilderness designation on ORV use was an issue in seven studies. In general, all studies concluded that while some ORV use would be displaced, this use could

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easily be absorbed by and accommodated on other public lands in Wyoming with negligible impacts.

Impacts on Grazing Management

The ability of BLM and its permittees to maintain existing and construct new grazing facilities, and to manage livestock was an issue in six studies. One study analyzed the impacts of wilderness designation on the ranching operations on adjacent private land. Both Congressional direction and BLM policy allow the continuation of existing grazing use in designated wilderness. Therefore, facilities required for the management of grazing use will remain in those areas designated wilderness. New improvements may be allowed to improve livestock management or to aid in the management of wilderness values. The studies concluded that existing facilities would not be impacted and new facilities in some cases may be appropriate, although controls on access and the scheduling and type of maintenance would be determined through wilderness management plans for specific areas.

Impacts on Timber Harvest

Wilderness designation would close the designated lands to the sale and harvest of commercial timber, fuelwood, and posts and poles. Most studies concluded that a certain amount of timber harvest would be foregone. However, in almost all cases, the amount of harvest foregone was not significant and would not significantly affect local economies.

Impacts on Wildlife Management

There are many species of fish and wildlife inhabiting WSAs in Wyoming, including Colorado Cutthroat Trout, antelope, mule deer, moose, elk, bighorn sheep, and a variety of birds of prey. Wilderness designation generally could help preserve and protect the habitats of these species, while nondesignation may lead to other resource uses that could be detrimental to the habitat. However, in some instances, the wildlife management actions required to preserve/enhance wildlife and fish populations would be precluded by wilderness designation or nondesignation on the wildlife habitat in the WSAs.

Impacts on Water Quality

Several WSAs in Wyoming contain all or portions of highly erodible watersheds. Wilderness designation would significantly reduce the threat of surface-disturbing activities, but could also limit BLM's ability to take erosion control measures. Four studies analyzed the impact of designation or nondesignation on water quality.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION RELATING TO THE WYOMING STATEWIDE RECOMMENDATION

The Billings (Montana) study contains study areas which cross into Wyoming. Each state's recommendation will contain the same WSA-specific analysis for the cross border WSAs to provide continuity and clarity. The acres in the WSAs split between Wyoming and Montana are being reported in their respective state's packages and are split between the reporting state's draft legislation.

Each of the nine study efforts considered the plans and policies of Federal, State, and local governments, and Indian tribes to identify any conflicts with the proposed actions in the wilderness EISs. Although some local governments disagreed with BLM's recommendations to designate areas as wilderness, and the environmental Protection Agency supported all wilderness to ensure environmental protection, no direct conflicts with other agency land use plans was discovered.

Appendix 1 of the study report is a table showing the inholdings in several of the WSA's that are recommended suitable for wilderness designation. These inholdings are either State land, where the State owns both the surface and mineral estate; split estate where the State owns the minerals and BLM owns the surface; or the inholding is private land.

Appendix 2 of the report contains a summary of the two-volume wilderness suitability/study report for the Scab Creek ISA. This document details the recommendation and rationale for Wyoming BLM's only ISA. Orig-

WILDERNESS STUDY REPORT

nally designated as a "primitive area" in 1975, Scab Creek was one of several natural or primitive areas throughout BLM that became ISAs by virtue of Section 603(a) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). This section of FLPMA directed the Secretary of the Interior to report wilderness recommendations on natural and primitive areas to the President by July 1, 1980. Only one such unit - Scab Creek - existed in Wyoming. The draft suitability report and EIS for Scab Creek was released for public review in late 1980. The final Wilderness Study Report was released in 1984.

comment period for the eight draft wilderness EISs listed below. Approximately 65 percent of the comments that were received, generally favored wilderness designation for some or all of the WSAs. About 30 percent of the comments generally opposed designation of any wilderness. Many comments (5%) did not express an opinion on wilderness designation.

Other Federal, State, and local agencies with an interest in or jurisdiction within the WSAs were asked to comment on each of the EISs.

The total number of comments received on each of the eight study efforts are summarized in the following Table. Public comments are summarized in the Summary Analysis of WSA Recommendations for each WSA.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE STUDIES

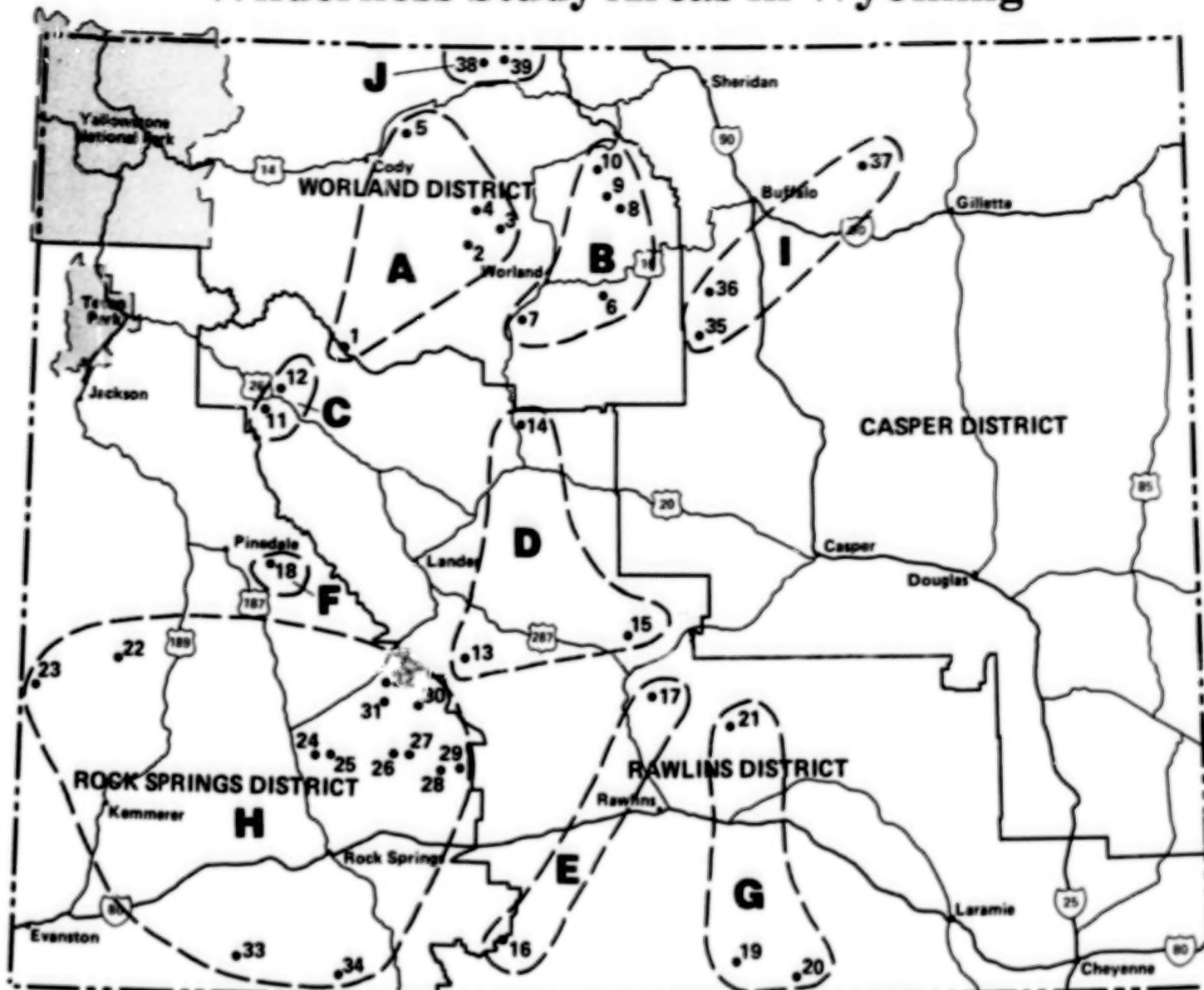
A total of 1,693 comments, both oral and written, on the Wyoming WSAs were submitted during the formal

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE STUDIES

Study Name	Draft Comment Period	Total Comments on Wilderness Issue	Final EIS Released
Rock Springs Dist.	Sept.-Nov. 1988	455	Oct. 1990
Adobetown/Ferris	May-July 1983	46	Jan. 1988
Grass Creek/Cody	July-Sept. 1984	226	Oct. 1990
Buffalo	Aug.-Oct. 1984	35	June 1986
Lander	Jan.-Mar. 1985	600	Mar. 1990
Washakie	Nov. 1986-Jan. 1987	169	Jan. 1991
Great Divide	Jan.-Mar. 1987	131	Aug. 1990
Dubois/Whiskey Mtn.	Sept.-Nov. 1988	31	Mar. 1990

Wilderness Study Areas in Wyoming



A—Grass Creek/Cody Wilderness EIS

1. Owl Creek
2. Bobcat Draw Badlands
3. Sheep Mountain
4. Red Butte
5. McCullough Peaks

B—Washakie Wilderness EIS

6. Honeycombs
7. Cedar Mountain
8. Medicine Lodge
9. Alkali Creek
10. Trapper Creek

C—Whiskey Mountain-Dubois Badlands Wilderness EIS

11. Whiskey Mountain
12. Dubois Badlands

D—Lander Wilderness EIS

13. Sweetwater Canyon
14. Copper Mountain
15. Sweetwater Rocks (4 Areas)

E—Adobe Town-Ferris Mountains Wilderness EIS

16. Adobe Town
17. Ferris Mountains

F—Scab Creek Wilderness EIS

18. Scab Creek

G—Great Divide Wilderness EIS

19. Encampment River Canyon
20. Prospect Mountain
21. Bennett Mountain

H—Rock Springs Wilderness EIS

22. Lake Mountain
23. Raymond Mountain
24. Buffalo Hump
25. Sand Dunes
26. Alkali Draw
27. South Pinnacles
28. Alkali Basin/East Sand Dunes
29. Red Lake
30. Honeycomb Buttes
31. Oregon Buttes
32. Whitehorse Creek
33. Devil's Playground/Twin Buttes
34. Red Creek Badlands

I—Buffalo Wilderness EIS

35. Gardner Mountain
36. North Fork
37. Fortification Creek

J—Billings Wilderness EIS

38. Pryor Mountain
39. Bighorn Tack-on

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